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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 67th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 16 November 2001, at 10.55 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BONOAN-DANDAN

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* No summary record was prepared for the first part (closed) of the meeting.

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The public part of the meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 6) (continued)

Second periodic report of France (E/1990/6/Add.27; E/C.12/Q/FRA/1; written replies to the list of issues, prepared by the Government of France (document without a symbol); HRI/CORE/1/Add.17/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of France took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. KESSEDJIAN (France) said that the size of the French delegation indicated the importance that his Government attached to the work of the Committee. The delegation included representatives of the Office of the National Ombudsman (Médiateur), the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights, and many ministries, all of whom were responsible, on a daily basis, for resolving the important questions that the Committee oversaw. He was sure that the discussion would be richly instructive.

3. Mr. HENAULT (France) said that France was particularly committed to the complementary and indivisible nature of human rights; under the French Constitution, civil and political rights and economic and social rights enjoyed equal standing. Without concrete and effective measures, however, rights remained merely theoretical. His presentation would thus focus on the specific measures taken by France to permit all persons, without discrimination of any kind, to enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, with emphasis on three areas: the campaign against social exclusion; minority languages and cultures; and the role of the independent French authorities, namely, the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the National Ombudsman.

4. France's level of development and economic prosperity did not, of course, preclude the persistence of social exclusion, a problem the country had been broadly considering since 1998, in an attempt to identify what measures would be necessary to combat and prevent it. France had noted the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, and the need to coordinate the work of all ministries and institutional partners concerned with the issue. Its policy on social exclusion had been developed on the basis of proposals put forward by networks of associations and social actors that had direct contact with persons in a situation of exclusion. That process, in which 18 ministries had taken part, had resulted in the adoption, on 4 March 1998, of a governmental programme which had been allocated more than 8 billion euros for the implementation of new measures over a three-year period, and in the enactment of the Framework Law of 29 July 1998 concerning measures against exclusion.

5. In June 2001, the Council of Ministers had adopted a national plan to combat poverty and social exclusion for the period 2001 to 2003. The Framework Law had had three priorities: to ensure access by all to the fundamental rights to work, housing and health; to confront situations of distress and social emergencies; and to ensure coordination among the various actors. The

objective of the first priority area was, not to create specific rights for destitute persons, but to adapt the law and establish follow-up and supporting measures, so as to ensure access by all to the rights to which they were entitled.

6. In the area of employment, the Government had created support programmes tailored to the needs of persons in difficulty, designed to continue until the person in question was successfully employed. Two examples were the TRACE ("Access route to employment") programme, which had benefited 51,000 young persons in 2000, and the PAP (personalized action programme), under which all unemployed job seekers were supported until they succeeded in finding work.

7. In the area of housing, the aim was to ensure that all persons had access to shelter, water and electricity. Those comforts were the basic minimum conditions for social integration, and helped a person to confront other problems, such as sickness or unemployment. Relevant measures covered such areas as access to and retention of housing, and the campaign against unhealthy housing. The Framework Law also provided for a single nationwide registration system of applications for placement in low-cost housing, so that account could be taken of the period of time the applicant had been on the waiting list. A number of measures had been taken to reduce the number of evictions, including the introduction of mandatory grace periods for payment of rent or seeking alternative accommodation. The Framework Law had also introduced a specific provision to prevent lead poisoning in children, requiring the landlord to undertake renovations to eliminate the risk of toxicity. Lastly, a new law on solidarity and urban renewal, enacted in 2000, required French municipalities to make 20 per cent of their housing stock available for social housing, with a view to promoting social heterogeneity.

8. The Framework Law also provided for the establishment of regional programmes providing access to preventive health care and medical treatment for destitute persons. A later law, enacted on 27 July 1999, had introduced universal sickness insurance coverage, with a reimbursement rate of 100 per cent for persons on very low incomes.

9. In addition, the Framework Law provided for measures to confront social emergencies, including the improvement of conditions in shelters and social rehabilitation centres, and measures to prevent the separation of families housed in institutions, to ensure that water, energy and telephone services were not cut off, and to better coordinate emergency financial aid. That law also provided for enhanced cooperation among the various public authorities and non-governmental bodies involved in resolving the problem of social exclusion. To that end, a Poverty and Exclusion Observatory had been created, along with departmental coordination committees.

10. However, the fight against poverty and social exclusion had not yet been won. Although significant progress had been made, increased resources needed to be mobilized: the new strategy to the year 2003 emphasized the return to work of the long-term unemployed and access by all to their fundamental rights.

11. France was also actively involved in the promotion of regional and minority languages and cultures. The edifice of the French Republic reposed on a social contract that aimed to transcend all differences and to which all could subscribe, regardless of their characteristics.

Society was composed of persons who were equal before the law without distinction as to origin, race or religion. Articles 1 and 2 of the Constitution respectively provided that France was an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic, and that the language of the Republic was French. That affirmation should not, however, be interpreted as a negation of the linguistic and cultural riches of the national heritage. On the contrary, the Government strove to promote and develop linguistic and cultural diversity. The written replies to the list of issues mentioned various measures undertaken to promote languages used in the overseas territories. It should be added that the development of those languages was not limited to their respective territories, but took its place in the common cultural heritage of the entire nation, including metropolitan France.

12. In the area of culture, significant budgetary allocations had been made in 2000 and 2001 to protect and enhance the linguistic heritage, both oral and written; to promote publications in the various languages used in France; to monitor linguistic practices; and to provide financial support to those sectors of cultural life where the language was the creative source, such as song, drama and audiovisual performances. Multiannual language development programmes had been created, including one which enabled libraries to purchase books and promoted the publication or translation of books written in the regional languages and in languages with no territorial ties to France. In addition, language forums had been held in Toulouse, Brest, Nice and Perpignan, attesting to the growing interest of the French people in preserving and promoting their linguistic heritage.

13. In the area of education, new guidelines had been established providing for bilingual instruction in the regional languages of France. Instruction was also provided in languages without territorial ties to France. Colloquial Arabic and Berber were the most common, and were now taught to thousands of students at various levels.

14. Governmental initiatives alone could not, however, ensure full respect for the rights enshrined in the Covenant; and independent institutions therefore also played a role. The National Advisory Commission on Human Rights provided oversight and formulated proposals, offering advisory opinions both during the formulation of laws, policies and programmes and subsequently, in the implementation phase, covering the full range of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. The Commission was composed of members of civil society; representatives of human rights organizations, trade union organizations, and France's principal religions; of academicians, members of the Bar, and sociologists; and of representatives of the Government and National Assembly. Since 1998, the Commission had adopted nine opinions regarding the rights covered by the Covenant, in particular with regard to extreme poverty, exclusion, the right to health and the right to housing. It had also contributed to the preparation of France's second periodic report.

15. The other independent institution, the Office of the National Ombudsman, heard complaints from any natural or legal person who felt that an administrative body or an entity responsible for administering a public service had failed to do its job properly. If the complaint seemed justified, the Ombudsman made recommendations to the concerned body, including the request that the dispute should be settled fairly. The Office was also empowered to make proposals for reform, if it found the exercise of an administrative duty or the application of a law to be less than satisfactory.

16. The Ombudsman had 225 representatives throughout the country, and each département had at least one representative in its prefecture. With a view to assisting disadvantaged members of the population, representatives were also posted in sensitive districts. In 2000, the Ombudsman had received nearly 54,000 complaints, more than one third of which concerned the social sector (health, social protection, unemployment insurance and the right to work). A number of the Ombudsman's proposals for reform had been successfully implemented, including the creation of national scholarships for which students of all ages were eligible on the basis of need, and measures to enable persons without a fixed domicile to open a postal or bank account.

17. In his presentation, he had singled out just a few examples illustrating the diversity of the measures undertaken, and of the structures involved in the implementation of rights. France was of course not above reproach, and the full enjoyment of rights was a goal rather than a reality. The economic situation, both global and domestic, and regional and local differences, also had a direct impact on the application of the Covenant. In no circumstances, however, could those difficulties justify any failure to respect the rights set forth in the Covenant.

18. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the representative of France for his comprehensive overview and update. She asked what, in the view of the French delegation, was that country's most important achievement in the area of economic, social and cultural rights.

19. Mr. SADI said he was impressed by the size and eminent composition of the French delegation, which attested to the seriousness with which that country took its obligations under the Covenant. He would like to know whether France's perspective on the application of human rights had hardened as a result of the events of 11 September 2001, in particular with regard to refugees and asylum-seekers.

20. He noted that anyone who acquired French citizenship was henceforth considered simply French, regardless of ethnic background, which seemed to him an admirable approach. It could, however, lead to problems: France's attitude towards its ethnic minorities had been challenged by the Human Rights Committee. He would like to know how the Government reconciled its perspective with the prevailing international stance as exemplified by the Human Rights Committee's position.

21. Lastly, he inquired what was the French Government's attitude towards the proposed optional protocol. France's leadership in that regard would be welcome, since it would be the best way of ensuring that economic, social and cultural rights were justiciable.

22. Mr. HUNT said that France was a recognized world leader in the establishment of national human rights institutions, such as the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights. That body was based in Paris but seemingly had no branches elsewhere in the country; he wondered whether, in the delegation's view, the establishment of regional branches would be beneficial. According to paragraph 106 of the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.17/Rev.1), the Commission was an independent body; so too, according to paragraph 67 of that document, was the Office of the Ombudsman. He asked how such assertions could be reconciled with the fact that both bodies were represented in the composition of the current delegation.

23. Mr. AHMED noted that the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights was only a consultative body. He wished to know whether the Office of the Ombudsman was of similar status, or whether it could issue mandatory rulings having the force of law rather than mere recommendations; if only the latter, would anyone have the authority to enforce them? According to the Economic Survey for France for the year 2000 issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, France had made an excellent economic recovery, due not only to an improved economic climate but also to more balanced growth and structural reform, leading to enhanced job creation. He would be interested to know how, and to what extent, the situation was reflected in social services and other aspects of human rights.

24. Mr. MARCHAN ROMERO noted that, pursuant to article 55 of the French Constitution, international human rights instruments to which France was a State party could be invoked directly in the courts. He wondered, however, whether any articles of the Covenant had been specifically incorporated in the Constitution. The description, under chapter III of the core document, of the general legal framework for the protection of human rights was not completely clear in that regard. He asked whether there was any case law relating to direct invocation of the Covenant's provisions in the courts.

25. Mr. MARTYNOV said that he too would welcome clarification about the independence of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, particularly since he understood it to be attached to the Office of the Prime Minister and therefore part of the Government's administrative structure.

26. The CHAIRPERSON invited the French delegation to reply to the questions of a general nature just raised by members, before putting questions relating to articles 1-3.

27. Mr. HENAULT (France) said that his delegation appreciated members' complimentary remarks about France's record in national human rights institutions, in which his country took great pride. In general, the aim was to promote and uphold human rights through the national legislation as a whole. He was not sure whether the Covenant's provisions had ever been directly invoked in the courts, but great pains had been taken, involving considerable administrative and budgetary resources, to promote an essentially comprehensive approach to recognition, in administration as well as by the public, of the importance of the Covenant and other international human rights instruments. That, perhaps - to reply to the Chairperson's question - was the most significant aspect of current achievements.

28. The important feature of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights was not that it was attached to the Office of the Prime Minister but that it could act on its own initiative, wielding full authority in any matter as it saw fit. Its findings were always in the public domain, and were far from always conforming to government policy. In short, it was truly independent.

29. The grave consequences of the terrorist events of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America had certainly affected France, as they had most other countries, but had not been allowed to change the country's approach to the exercise of human rights. Although action to prevent and combat terrorism had been stepped up, and admittedly not all of the National

Consultative Commission's recommendations had been fully taken up, all the anti-terrorism measures deemed necessary had been adopted in full recognition of the need to uphold public rights and freedoms, including all aspects of human rights.

30. Ms. DUBROCARD (France) said that France did not in principle have an unfavourable attitude towards the draft optional protocol to the Covenant relating to the receiving of individual communications. France was already a party to similar instruments and had recently ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which likewise envisaged a procedure for the communication of individual complaints. Consultations were currently taking place among various ministries, the questions raised being broadly similar to those asked by the Committee members. Although certain rights were not yet directly justiciable, there had been nothing hitherto to suggest any opposition in principle to ratification of an optional protocol.

31. Pursuant to the Constitution, the provisions of international instruments prevailed over domestic law. On the question of direct applicability of such an instrument, the approach to the Covenant in national jurisdiction was not uniform. For example, according to the Council of State (Conseil d'Etat), individuals could not invoke such provisions directly. The Court of Cassation, in a number of judgements handed down involving the Convention's provisions, had ruled that those provisions had not been incompatible with the judgement challenged and had not been violated in the applications it had been called upon to examine. It had not provided a specific reply, however, to the question of the Covenant's direct applicability at the domestic level.

32. Ms. FONTAINE (France) said that the Office of the Ombudsman, which had been established in January 1973, was fully independent and not subject to advice or instruction from any other authority. The incumbent was appointed for a six-year term, could not be removed from office during that period, and had powers of jurisdiction similar to members of parliament. The Office was funded from the State budget but was answerable to no other authority, including that of the Prime Minister, being subject only to the financial scrutiny applicable to all public accounts. Representatives of the Office were currently located in many parts of the country, and the Ombudsman's services were, indeed, more accessible than hitherto because the office could now be approached directly, not merely through members of parliament. Although the Ombudsman's recommendations were not binding, they were usually acted upon; they were also published in the Official Gazette. The Office issued an annual report, copies of which were available for the Committee to consult. It was also empowered to issue injunctions against the administration in cases of non-compliance with court rulings; that power, however, had rarely been exercised.

33. Ms. PELLET (France), replying to a question from Mr. Hunt concerning the independence of the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights, said that its independence was enshrined in article 1 of the decree establishing the Commission. It was funded from the same budget line as the Office of the Prime Minister for operational reasons, but it was empowered to act fully independently: for example, it was not required only to respond to requests from ministries but had the power to act of its own motion.

34. The Commission was represented in the French delegation simply to enable it to respond to the relevant points in the list of issues. Such representation did not, in her view, compromise the Commission's independence.

35. In reply to a question from Mr. Martynov concerning regional offices of the Commission, she said that the Commission was not empowered to receive individual complaints and thus did not require a large staff. Under article 1 of its constituent decree, its role was to consider and rule on any substantive issue involving human rights. Its opinions were prepared by seven specialist sub-commissions, and since their monthly meetings were held in the Commission's Paris headquarters, there was no need to establish other offices.

36. Mr. HENAULT (France), replying to Mr. Sadi's point concerning minorities, said Mr. Sadi had been right to underline the distinctiveness of the notion of human rights enshrined in the French legal tradition. As a result of the French Revolution, respect for the individual as a citizen, regardless of considerations such as gender, race or social status, had taken root as a fundamental political reality that was recognized in the Constitution. While he would not deny that people speaking minority languages faced certain difficulties, nevertheless the very diversity of French society was perceived by the majority of French people as the cornerstone of the country's civil harmony.

37. In reply to Mr. Ahmed's question concerning the impact of the improved economic situation on government action, he said he did not know if there was any direct link between the improvement in the economy and efforts by all political actors to deal with the problem of social exclusion, but that the improvement had certainly made it possible to commit considerable resources to that cause. The principal obstacles to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in many countries were poverty and lack of development, and the economic situation had no doubt helped France in its efforts to safeguard those rights.

38. A theme running through the written replies was the priority given in France to the availability of judicial and administrative remedies that would allow individuals to obtain effective implementation of their rights. Legislation on discrimination in commercial transactions such as sales or rent, for example, had made it easier for people to obtain satisfaction through the courts when their rights were not respected.

39. The CHAIRPERSON invited members of the Committee to put any follow-up questions they might have on the general information section of the list of issues concerning articles 1-3.

40. Mr. MARTYNOV said he understood that the Chairperson of the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights was appointed by the Prime Minister. Who appointed the Ombudsman?

41. With regard to article 2, he said that the percentage of GNP France devoted to international assistance had not reflected the recent improvements in the economic situation. In 1988, the figure had been 0.59 per cent; in 1998, 0.32 per cent; and in 2000, 0.45 per cent. He would be interested to know what France's policy was in that regard.

42. Mr. ATANGANA, referring to article 2, paragraph 2, on non-discrimination, said that, France's replies notwithstanding, according to information received there appeared to the extraordinarily long delays in dealing with applications for asylum. For example, some of the thousands of young asylum-seekers fleeing from repression in the Kabylia region of Algeria had been left to fend for themselves for more than 17 months, with no work and no access to welfare. He wondered how the Government intended to reduce the timeframe for dealing with such applications.

43. Mr. MALINVERNI said that, according to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) figures for 2000, while in 1988 France's allocation for official development assistance (ODA) had been 0.60 per cent of GNP, in 1998 it had been only 0.40 per cent of GNP, indicating a move away from rather than towards the United Nations goal of 1 per cent of GNP. He wondered what the explanation was for that trend.

44. On the question of non-discrimination, according to the World Amazigh Congress, there were around 1.5 million Berbers in France, some of whom had French nationality. In common with speakers of other minority languages, they could offer an option in their own language in the baccalauréat examination, but they complained of discrimination inasmuch as speakers of other languages were able to attend special preparatory classes, whereas no such provision was made for Berbers.

45. With regard to minorities in general, and with reference to France's reservation to article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, he wondered whether France could still assert that it had no minorities. Surely the situation in France was no different from that of many other countries? He also asked whether a simple guarantee of equal rights for all was sufficient to protect such minorities.

46. Ms. BARAHONA-RIERA joined others in asking whether France intended to increase its contribution to development cooperation in line with the growth in its GNP, as some other European countries had done.

47. Throughout its report, the Government had emphasized its interest in and support for development, and she asked what percentage of its development cooperation allocation France intended to contribute to the various funds. In particular, she wondered what progress had been made in establishing a fund to support the implementation of the recommendations of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, the 1995 World Conference on Women and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, and what percentage France intended to contribute to that fund.

48. With regard to article 3, she asked what legislative reforms France had used to penalize all forms of trafficking in persons, whether for sexual purposes or for labour. Sweden had recently introduced legislation on prostitution, penalizing not the victim but the purchaser, partly in order to facilitate prosecution of prostitution rings. Did France have plans for similar legislative reforms?

49. Mr. HUNT commended the State party for the high quality of its detailed information on development cooperation, which was commensurate with the importance attached to the subject in the Covenant. France was a major, influential actor in the Bretton Woods institutions and deserved credit for its part in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. When performing their duties in the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), did France's representatives explicitly take account of France's own obligation under the Covenant to engage in international cooperation, and of the domestic obligations of recipient States under the Covenant?

50. Many States in the South argued that what would assist their development most was simply access to markets in the North. France, however, supported tariffs, notably in respect of agricultural products, in line with European Union policy. What would France's answer be to a Southern State that invoked France's obligation under the Covenant and explained that the most effective way to discharge that obligation would be to provide market access to the North?

51. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO said the administrative and legal basis for France's application of the right to asylum was clear from the Government's written replies. It was often difficult, however, to demarcate the rights of asylum-seekers and the obligations of the public authorities; he therefore wondered what political and judicial criteria were applied in granting asylum. He referred to a recent case of an asylum-seeker from Morocco whose application had been turned down and who had been murdered on his return to Morocco. Was there any provision that might prevent a person in that situation from being subjected to such persecution?

52. Lastly, he would be interested to know what approach was taken to safeguarding the Berber language, given its problematic features as a mainly oral language using a variety of transcription systems.

53. Ms. FONTAINE (France), replying to a question by Mr. Martynov, said that the Ombudsman was appointed by a presidential decree of the Council of Ministers. The reason why citizens applied to the Ombudsman through a deputy or senator was to alert Parliament to the status of events.

54. Mr. DESSEIX (France) said that since 1998 significant changes had been made to French policy on international cooperation and development aid. The Government had tried to give a new political impetus to international cooperation by introducing a series of priority objectives and innovative programmes. The Priority Solidarity Fund (formerly referred to as the Aid and Cooperation Fund) had been introduced to provide concrete aid to least developed countries, inter alia, by implementing measures to combat poverty and inequality, providing support for democracy and the rule of law, improving regional planning and encouraging a more rational management of natural resources.

55. Although France had always felt an obligation towards its former colonies, since 1998 it had been extending aid to other countries as well. The concept of partnership was fundamental when creating and implementing programmes. Efforts were being made to improve the transparency of cooperation, through assessments and documentation. An interministerial committee for international cooperation and development had been created so that each ministry could participate and make recommendations, enabling priorities to be set. A High Council for

International Cooperation (HCCI) had been created to strengthen the dialogue between the State and civil society; its 60 members were independent experts who advised the Government on matters relating to international cooperation.

56. Statistics showed that there had been a significant reduction in French official development assistance (ODA) in recent years. Although that was undeniably true, it was important to take into account the fact that since 2000 aid to the French overseas territories of French Polynesia and New Caledonia had been excluded from the figure. The sharp decline in French ODA between 1994 and 1998 was due to various economic factors, and was offset by increased efficiency. As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), it was true that France's ODA contributions were lower than those of several other leading industrialized countries, but at 0.33 per cent in 2000, neither was its contribution insignificant.

57. In reply to the question about measures taken to help countries that found it difficult to gain access to foreign capital markets, he drew attention to the Priority Solidarity Area, a group of 61 countries eligible for bilateral ODA. The French Development Agency (AFD) played a leading role in implementing French cooperation programmes in those countries. Over 500 projects had been financed by a special fund created for that purpose in 2000.

58. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to put questions regarding articles 6-9 of the Covenant.

59. Mr. ATANGANA, on the issue of trade union rights, said that one French trade union had expressed concern that trade union rights were compromised by the criterion of representativeness applied to the five largest trade unions. He would be interested to know the delegation's opinion on the matter and whether any measures were going to be implemented to rectify the situation.

60. Mr. CEAUSU asked the delegation to provide a summary of the measures France had taken to address the problem of unemployment. Both the second periodic report and the written replies indicated that in recent years great efforts had been made to create jobs. Particular attention had been paid to enabling young people to enter the labour market. A law reducing the working week to 35 hours had also been enacted. Could the State party indicate the current status of application of that law? What impact had it had on job creation and unemployment? Certain temporary jobs had been created and it would be interesting to know whether any steps had been taken to make such jobs permanent.

61. Mr. MARTYNOV noted with appreciation that in recent years France had implemented many successful measures to create jobs. However, questions had been raised by certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs) about the recent trend towards increased job insecurity. According to the report of the Commissariat Général du Plan, there was a very high rate of involuntary part-time employment. The report also indicated a strong correlation between suicide and the threat of unemployment: since the beginning of the 1990s, suicide rates among people aged between 35 and 44 had overtaken those of older age groups, highlighting the growing vulnerability of the population of working age. NGOs alleged that the French Government was failing to react to that state of affairs. The State party should indicate its position on the issue.

62. He would appreciate further information about the representative status enjoyed by the group of quasi-monopolistic trade unions, an issue that had also been raised by Mr. Atangana. Such a policy was undoubtedly damaging to smaller, new trade unions. As personnel in the armed forces did not enjoy the right to form trade unions and were unable to participate in collective bargaining, what was done to ensure that their rights were taken into account? It would also be interesting to know whether civilian personnel in the armed forces enjoyed such rights.

63. The State party should indicate why it had not ratified the ILO Convention concerning the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents, 1993 (No. 174), which was of particular interest in view of the recent explosion at a chemical fertilizer plant in Toulouse. Could the State party also explain why it had not ratified the ILO Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) of Social Policy Convention, 1962 (No. 117) and indicate its intentions in that regard?

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.